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Forest Fires Force Many Californians from Their Homes

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Los Angeles
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Wildfires have forced thousands of people from their homes in southern California. Blazes around the state have scorched more than 16,000 hectares. More than 1,000 homes are threatened north of the city.

A fire near Santa Clarita in suburban Los Angeles has burned 2,300 hectares. It was 40 percent contained by early Monday, and some residents were allowed to return to their homes.

But firefighter Jim Dellamonica says conditions are still difficult. "The terrain is steep, rocky, hot," he said.

The fire forced the closure of a major highway for several hours over the weekend and prompted evacuation of nearby houses. Mr. Dellamonica says 1,500 firefighters are now battling the blaze. "We're doing everything possible for the protection of the property and the homes in this area, he said."

The fire was started when a red-tail hawk was electrocuted on a power line and the bird's burning body ignited the brush.

A larger fire in the nearby Angeles National Forest was 80 percent contained mid-day Monday.

Fire crews are fighting another blaze in Riverside County, east of Los Angeles, which was sparked by a gun owner doing target practice.

Several other fires are burning from San Diego in the south to Yosemite National Park in central California. In neighboring Nevada, crews are mopping up the remains of a blaze that burned 15 houses.

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Your email/letter/comment form has been received and your comment noted.

The Environmental Impact Statement is anticipated to be completed in late 2010 and will be available at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/ea.htm>.